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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [EAID](#) [IS](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MFA AFFIRMS COMMON LINE ON PALESTINIAN ASSISTANCE,
DOUSTE-BLAZY TO VISIT TERRITORIES/ISRAEL IN EARLY MARCH

REF: STATE 21256

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) We discussed reftel points on assistance to Palestinians with MFA desk officer for Palestinian affairs Mariam Diallo, who reaffirmed GoF support for the January 30 Quartet statement. She stressed that the GoF had established clear conditions the next Palestinian government must meet to receive GoF assistance -- renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of past accords with Israel, including Oslo. At the same time, the GoF did not want to suggest that it would abandon the Palestinian people; FM Douste Blazy had passed this message to independent Palestinian politician Marwan Barghouti during a meeting in Paris on February 6.

¶2. (C) In the event that the next PA government failed to meet the Quartet conditions, Diallo concluded, the GoF and EU would look for other options to continue to assist the Palestinian people directly, without money going directly to the PA. She speculated that it was still possible that a new Palestinian government could meet the international community's conditions, particularly if it were the "ideal scenario" of a Hamas-Fatah cohabitation government led by technocrats, in which Hamas took a back-seat role and deferred entirely to Abu Mazen on foreign policy. Such a government, she added, could issue a statement of principles in line with international demands, with Hamas committing to a longterm cease-fire but not yet changing its charter or recognizing Israel. Diallo conceded that such a scenario was perhaps remote, but she considered it nonetheless possible.

¶3. (C) Diallo, who worked previously in the West Bank for UNDP and participated in the EU observer mission for the January elections, offered impressions of the voting and the reasons for Hamas' surprise victory. She concurred with the prevailing view that Hamas' victory represented principally a rejection of Fatah and its corruption, and noted that many of her secular Palestinian friends voted Hamas purely as a means of rebuking Fatah's "arrogance." She opined that Palestinian disillusionment with the Oslo accords and dejection over the separation barrier, combined with Hamas' claiming credit for Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, put more votes in Hamas' camp. She noted with some surprise that Hamas had surpassed its traditional strongholds to attract sizable votes in Jerusalem, where she observed Hamas getting "nearly every vote" recorded at one ballot counting station. Up to 20 percent of Palestinian security forces had voted Hamas, she observed, a sign that Hamas' had already infiltrated this sector. Another factor which Diallo observed on the ground in Hamas' favor was the discipline and organization of its cadres, particularly women. In contrast, she described Fatah as no longer existing as a single entity and lacking in leadership. Diallo conceded that the GoF had not foreseen the landslide Hamas victory, and just before the vote, had

estimated that Hamas would prevail over Fatah only by a slight margin.

¶4. (C) In closing, Diallo confirmed that French FM Douste-Blazy will travel to the Palestinian territories and Israel in early March, before Israel's elections, with the dates still to be determined. (Douste-Blazy will also accompany President Chirac on a March 4 trip to Saudi Arabia.) According to Diallo, the FM's objective will be to reiterate that France and Europe will not abandon the Palestinian people, particularly to Iran or others, while reaffirming the Quartet conditions.

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